

# General Foot Care

Information for patients, relatives, and carers

December 2023

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This leaflet will take you through a step-by-step guide to support maintaining healthy foot care.

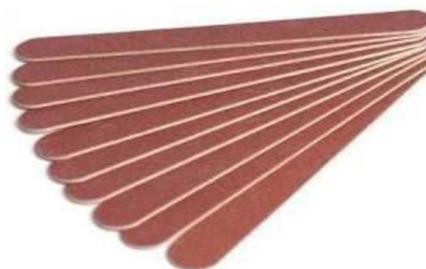
## Maintaining Foot Hygiene

- Wash your feet daily in warm water with a mild soap, for 1-2 minutes either as a footbath or during normal bathing. Make sure you rinse your feet well afterwards.
- Make sure that you dry them thoroughly, especially in-between the toes. Be careful not to pull the toes apart too roughly as this may tear the skin.

## Daily Foot Care

- Checking your feet regularly, daily if possible. You will also notice any concerns sooner, preventing problems by seeing a health care professional sooner. Moisturising feet (but not between the toes) will help to keep skin supple and prevent cracking.
- Keeping your feet warm or at a constant temperature is also important, but do not warm them too close to the fire! Warm stockings or socks can help but avoid anything too tight which can restrict your circulation or cramp your toes. Wearing fleece-lined boots or shoes or even an extra pair of socks will also keep you warm but do make sure your shoes are not tight as a result. Bed socks are also good when the weather is very chilly.

## Cutting Toenails Safely



- Before you start make sure that you have all the equipment easily to hand so that you do not have to stretch to reach anything. You will need nail nippers / clippers and emery board.
- Ensure that you are in a comfortable position - you may want to have your foot resting on a stool of suitable height.
- You may find it easier to cut your nails after a bath / shower or footbath when they will be softer. Filing only is easier before you bathe or shower.
- They should be cut straight across following the shape of your nail and not too short. Any thick nails or rough edges can be smoothed with an emery board.



- Toenails should never be cut too short as this may cause damage to the nail bed, and to the nail.
- The newly cut edge and any sharp corners of nails should be filed smooth. Always file in one direction only to avoid tearing the nail.
- Never pull or tear your toenails because this will irritate the skin around and may leave a spike of nail to cut into the toe.
- Thick toenails that are difficult to cut, should be filed regularly instead. File right across the thickness of the nail and not just the edge.
- Do not use any sharp instruments to clean around or under the nails, only use a nail brush / soft toothbrush after a bath or wash.
- Do not cut the nail down at the sides to relieve an “ingrown” toenail, as this will worsen the condition in the long-term.

## Getting Help with Cutting Toenails

Cutting toenails is not always an easy task as they are so far away from our hands and eyes! If you cannot manage to safely cut your toenails, then it may be easier to ask someone to do them for you following the guidance above. If you choose to pay to see a Podiatrist in private practice, then please ensure that they are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).

## Footwear: Make the Right Choice.... Right Shoe, Right Job

- Make sure that the footwear you choose is suitable for the job or activity planned. The older you get, the more important it is to wear a shoe that is comfortable, well-fitting and holds your foot firmly in place to give adequate support.
- Many people wear slippers if their feet are hurting but this can encourage you to shuffle rather than letting the joints work as they should. A pair of running shoes or trainers are the best option as these provide a degree of shock absorption and stability and support the arch. Many shoes have cushioning or shock-absorbing soles to give you extra comfort while walking.
- When buying shoes, ensure that you can put them on and take them off easily.

Poorly fitting footwear can cause foot problems such as:

- Corns and Callus
- Blisters
- Toe deformities such as hammer toes and bunions
- Sprains
- In growing nails
- Ulceration

## Making Sure Shoes Are a Good Fit

- Draw around your feet upon paper (compare both as they are often different shapes and sizes). Cut the shape out and see if they fit in shoes without crumpling the edges. The paper template should fit neatly and easily.
- Feet do change over time, revisit your size and style periodically.
- Shoes are made in different sole shapes ('called lasts'). Does the shape suit your foot? Does the widest part of your foot fit on the widest part of the shoe? What about the depth at the toe?
- Avoid loose shoes. Accidents can be caused by insecure footwear.
- High heels alter your posture putting strain on your back, knees and ankles which can cause or aggravate foot deformities.
- Shoes should be flexible to allow normal movement at the toes. Ensure they deep enough at the front to let your toes move, especially if you have bunions or toe deformities.



- Avoid plastic easy-clean uppers, which do not allow the foot to breathe and will not stretch to accommodate your own foot shape.
- Shoes with a removable liner help with hygiene and room to add an insert/arch support (orthosis) if one is needed.
- Buy shoes at the end of the day as feet swell and become bigger.
- Your two feet may be differently sized. Fit to the largest.
- It is important that your footwear has a secure fastening such as laces, buckles, or Velcro. These stabilise the foot and help to prevent trips and falls. They hold your foot in the shoe and prevent the foot sliding forward and cramping the toes. Shoes must feel comfortable when you try them on, breaking them in can harm your feet.
- Osteoarthritic ankle problems can be helped by wearing a shoe with a small, elevated heel (less than 2cm) but if too high may irritate the knee. Knee problems may better respond to flexible soft shoes that mimic bare feet. It also makes sense to follow this style advice for hip and back problems.

## Shoes To Avoid

- Avoid 'slip-ons,' court shoes or flip flop /slider style shoes. These are kept on the foot by curling the toes. This can damage the toes or cause corns and callus. Slip-on shoes are usually narrow, must be wedged on to stay on the foot.
- A pointed toe box will squash your toes together and can cause bony deformity.
- A heel that is too high will cause the foot to be pushed to the end of the shoe, crushing the toes.
- A shoe made of plastic, which will cause your foot to sweat.
- A thin, hard sole, will not cushion your foot adequately.

## Sources of Information

For more information, please visit the Healthy Footwear Guide - [www.healthy-footwear-guide.com](http://www.healthy-footwear-guide.com)

If you suffer from specific conditions such as Diabetes or Rheumatoid Arthritis, please take more specific advice from your practitioner.

**This patient information is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.**

## How do I make a comment about my visit?

If you have visited our service, we aim provide the best possible service will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

If you have any suggestions or comments, please contact the patient advice and liaison service (PALS) on 0191 445 6129 (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday).

You can also email PALS at [ghnt.pals.service@nhs.net](mailto:ghnt.pals.service@nhs.net)

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Mrs Trudie Davies,  
Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust,  
Trust Headquarters,  
Queen Elizabeth Hospital,  
Sheriff Hill,  
Gateshead,  
NE9 6SX

The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

## Data Protection

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To assist us to improve the services available, your information may be used for clinical audit, research, teaching and anonymised for National NHS Reviews and Statistics.

Further information is available via Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust website ([Privacy - QE Gateshead](#)) or by contacting the Data Protection Officer by telephone on 0191 445 8418 or by email [ghnt.ig.team@nhs.net](mailto:ghnt.ig.team@nhs.net).

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